

One in, one out

That's the cardinal rule for keeping your home highly organized

By Katie Mills Giorgio
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“Have nothing in your home that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.” This is the motto by which Maggie Jackson, owner of The Organized Life in Cedar Rapids, lives and works by, literally.

As a professional organizer she helps homeowners make tough decisions about what to keep and what to get rid of. And according to Jackson and other local professionals, getting your home in order requires asking a lot of questions about what fills it.

Ask yourself:

- Is your home controlling you?
- What is the area of your home giving you the most stress?
- Have I used or worn this item in the last year?
- Will I use it immediately?
- Does it add any value to my life?
- If I got rid of it what's the worst thing that would happen? Can I easily replace it?

These questions illustrate that organizing your home is certainly not simple. “Some shows on TV make it seem so fun, quick, and easy,” says Gail Booth, owner of Space Doctors,



Small bins and baskets are the perfect tool for organizing a "junk" drawer.

in Swisher. “It can be fun, but it really can be emotional, too.”

Jackson agrees. “People don't realize there is a lot of psychology in it,” she says. “We have relationships with our stuff.”

They admit that getting organized does take time. But to get started both of these organization gurus suggest starting with one area of your home – breaking the task of organizing down so it is more manageable – and taking everything out of that space.

“You don't realize what you have until you take it all out,” says Booth.

The next step is simply putting like items together. “You then know what to get rid of based on what you have,” says Becky Esker, owner of Get Organized! in Cedar Rapids. A kitchen



Becky Esker/Get Organized!

doesn't need 10 wooden spoons and eight casserole dishes, for example.

And then it's a matter of deciding what needs to go where in the space you have available. “Its all about prime real estate when organizing,” says Jackson. Her goal – especially in kitchens – is to have one empty drawer, shelf or cupboard when she is done.

“Just because we have the space doesn't mean we have to fill it,” she says. Esker agrees and says start today.

“Set up a system that works from this day forward,” she says. “As time allows you go back and deal with the backlog, because if you don't start somewhere, you will never get ahead.”

All three experts insist the most important part is maintaining your new system for organization. “You have to



Katie Mills Giorgio/Cedar Rapids

Roll-out pantry shelves are a natural for categorizing kitchen items shelf by shelf.

commit to the process of organizing,” says Esker. “It isn't a one time thing.”

“There is no magic formula but there is a process that works,” says Jackson. “And this is not about being neat because there is a difference between being neat and being organized. Organization is systematic.”

As these organized women would say, find your system and stick with it.